

## Mauve, Anton [Anthonij]

(b Zaandam, Sept 18, 1838; d Arnhem, Feb 5, 1888).

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Anton Mauve: *Changing Pasture*, oil on canvas, 24 x 39 5/8 in. (61 x 100.6 cm), ca. 1880s (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913, Accession ID: 14.40.810); photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/110001486> <<http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/110001486>>

Dutch painter. He came from a large family of clergymen in the province of North Holland. At the age of 16 he was apprenticed to the animal painter Pieter Frederik van Os (1808–92): animals (especially sheep, but also cows and horses) became Mauve's preferred theme (see fig.). He then trained for a few months with Wouterus Verschuur, who gave him his love of horses, in the style, at least, of Paulus Potter and Philips Wouwerman. Initially Mauve painted horses above all else—not the shining animals Verschuur painted, but worn-out plodding beasts. In 1858 Mauve joined his much older friend Paul Gabriël on a trip to Oosterbeek, the Dutch Barbizon, where he met Gerard Bilders and Willem Maris, two artists who were to have an enormous influence on him. The premature death of Bilders, a painter with whom he shared emotionalism and fickleness of mood, came as a great shock to Mauve. Apart from Bilders, Willem Maris, who was six years his junior, was a lifelong friend. There are a number of similarities between their work as well as essential differences: Mauve tended to add human figures to his animal pieces, whereas the youngest of the Maris brothers did not; Mauve's cows, horses and sheep seem more peaceful than Maris's—at times almost listless. For a long time Mauve was impressed by Maris's virtuosity as a painter, although he eventually adopted a different style. There is a clear relationship between man and animal or between the animals themselves in Mauve's paintings, a noticeable difference from Maris's pictures.

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Mauve is considered one of the finest Hague school painters. His oeuvre can be divided into three periods: the early years, which coincide with his stay in Oosterbeek; the mature years in The Hague (from 1871 onwards); and the late period in Laren from 1885 until his death. The transitions between these periods occurred very gradually. The first period is characterized by dependence on his former teachers, Verschuur and van Os, and by a fondness for summery landscapes; for example, *Cows by a Pool near Oosterbeek* (Arnhem, Gemeentemus.). In The Hague his style began to crystallize. Although his forms started to flow one into the other, they still retained their structure. Instead of using picturesque elements to create a mood, Mauve came to rely on the general characteristics of the landscape and thereby achieved a greater degree of simplicity. The human figure assumed an increasingly prominent role, while such motifs as beach life and the dunes, taken from the coastal landscapes, occur frequently: *Morning Ride on the Beach* (1876; Amsterdam, Rijksmus.) and *Fishing Boat on the Beach at Scheveningen* (1876; Dordrecht, Dordrechts Mus.) are typical examples. During his Hague period Mauve began to apply the paint in thinner layers and indicated colour gradations by placing distinct touches of paint next to one another, so anticipating the techniques of the Neo-Impressionists. During his years in The Hague, Mauve used the shellfish-gatherer theme favoured by such Hague school artists as Jacob Maris and J. H. Weissenbruch; his *Shellfish-Gatherer* (Paris, Louvre), with its full range of grey tones, is a classic example. Apart from the various aspects of beach life, Mauve continued to paint animal subjects during this period. *Cows by a Ditch* (Munich, Neue Pin.) shows how he had managed to free himself from the style of his teachers: the brushstrokes are much freer and the composition no longer offers a distant view of the horizon because a row of trees screens off the background.

In 1881 and 1882 Vincent van Gogh worked in Mauve's studio. Mauve's wife, Ariëtte Carbentus, was his cousin so when van Gogh decided to become a painter and moved to The Hague, he went to Mauve for instruction. Van Gogh was the only workshop assistant Mauve ever had. In March 1882 there was a complete break between the two painters. Nevertheless van Gogh's work clearly shows that he learnt a good deal during this brief period: such themes as diggers, potato harvesters and wood merchants all originate from Mauve. During his period in The Hague, Mauve was active in artistic society. In 1876, together with Willem Maris and Hendrik Mesdag, he founded the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij ('Dutch Drawing Society'); in 1878 he became first art inspector of the Pulchri Studio and later, until 1883, its treasurer.

In about 1880 Mauve started to look for another place to live; he deplored the urbanization of The Hague, which interfered with his artistic activities. After wandering through Drenthe and Gelderland for a while he eventually settled in Laren. He was particularly fascinated by the intimacy of the village, its interiors, the peasant families and the workers in the fields. In 1885 his wife and children came to join him, and the Mauve family moved into the house next door to the artist Albert Neuhuys, who, together with Jozef Israëls, had originally discovered Laren as a painters' village. Mauve also contributed to the fame of the Laren school, which, although it never attained the same success as the Hague school, for a short time enjoyed an international reputation through such artists as Israëls, Neuhuys, Mauve and Max Liebermann; but on the whole the village was home to painters of lesser importance.

In Laren, Mauve could still feel that he was in direct contact with nature. He added a glass extension to his house (to enlarge his studio) and began to paint directly from nature without making preliminary sketches. This third period was dominated by the influence of François Millet and the rise of Realism. Although the influence of the great French painter should not be exaggerated, it is striking that human

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figures assumed an even greater importance in Mauve's paintings. His landscapes with sheep included more figures during this period, and he painted more and more themes from peasant life: for example *Women Binding Sheaves* (Wassenaar, priv. col., see 1983 exh. cat., p. 250), *Women Digging Potatoes* (Montreal, Mus. F.A.) and the *Vegetable Garden* (1887; Rotterdam, Mus. Boymans-van Beuningen). An important difference from Millet, who tended to depict the struggle of man against nature, is that Mauve emphasized the bond between them. One group of Mauve's paintings that has received little attention is his winter landscapes; especially in his watercolours (e.g. *Old Coach in Snow*, 1885; Philadelphia, PA, Mus. A.) he excelled in capturing the silence of winter. The work painted during this final period had a strong influence on Liebermann and Giovanni Segantini. In 1888, having been ordered to rest for a while, Mauve died suddenly after a stroke. His son, Anton Rudolf Mauve (1876–1962), was also a painter.

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## See also

Hague, The, §II, 3: Art life and organization, 1800 and after

Netherlands, the, §III, 6(ii): Painting and graphic arts, c 1850–c 1900

### More on this topic

Mauve, Anton <<http://oxfordartonline.com/benezit/view/10.1093/benz/9780199773787.001.0001/acref-9780199773787-e-00119252>> in Oxford Art Online <<http://oxfordartonline.com>>

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